

Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium

Board for State Academic Awards

State of Connecticut

Education Committee

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Testimony by

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Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Education Committee

Good Afternoon, my name is Diane Goldsmith and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium. I am here today to speak in favor of Raised Bill No. 947, An Act Concerning High School Credit for Approved Online Coursework. This bill speaks to the level of accountability required to ensure that online instruction is an effective option for students, whether they are accelerating in advanced placement or in need of credit recovery and that schools will give credit for such courses.

These minimum guidelines identified and outlined in this bill are aligned with the National Standards of Quality for Online Courses and the National Standards of Quality for Online Teaching as defined by the North American Council for Online Learning that have been adopted or adapted by numerous states with online programs including the CT Distance Learning Consortium.

I would like to briefly review our involvement with Online Learning, discuss what the research shows about the efficacy of online learning, and why we believe the provisions of this bill will both support student learning and provide cost savings to the state.

In 1998, the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium, or CTDLC, was formed to promote the development of online courses in CT's higher education institutions. Since then, distance education has grown so that in last academic year CT's public, private, two, and four year institutions offered over 3,000 online courses with enrollments of over 46,000 students.

In 2002, the CTDLC began to work as a partner in the K-12 arena. With a grant from the State Department of Education, we created the Adult Virtual High School to provide online courses to students enrolled in credit diploma programs or GED preparation at any of CT's Adult Education Programs. The CTDLC provides the courses, teachers, and teacher training. The Adult Education Programs provide guidance, mentoring, and the credentialing. In the last academic year, we offered 28 online credit courses and a GED study course and served over 1800 students.

I cite these statistics to make the point that online learning is neither a new nor an untested modality of learning in Connecticut.

For example: Comparison data evaluating students in CT's Adult Education programs shows that students enrolled in the CT Adult Virtual High School have done as well, if not better than, students enrolled strictly in face to face courses.

- Passing rates are equivalent to or higher than those of face to face learners.
- Average reading and math scores are slightly higher than face to face students that had not taken online courses.
- We also have learned how to improve the online learning experiences for students by providing mentors and by having programs share successful experiences.

And there are literally hundreds of studies dating back to 1928, when distance learning meant correspondence courses, showing that students studying at a distance, in courses built to meet quality standards, do as well and meet the same learning objectives as students studying in classrooms at all educational levels.

(<http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/>)

In 2007, you, the General Assembly, awarded monies to the CTDLC to create the CT Virtual Learning Center, to provide online courses to students enrolled in CT high schools who need Advanced Placement Courses, World languages, or credit recovery. Using the model of the AVHS, to build courses once and share them, the CTDLC provides the courses, teachers, training, and infrastructure while the high schools provide the guidance, mentoring, and credentialing.

Both the AVHS and the VLC are designed for low cost delivery to all of CT's students.

Both programs provide:

- Rigorous courses that have been reviewed by the CT State department of Education, and which incorporate student to teacher and student to student interactivity as well as parental and school staff oversight
- Curriculum, aligned with CT standards and approved by the College Board and the NCAA.
- Registration and student information systems which allow for comprehensive reporting to parents and schools.
- Courses taught by CT certified teachers who have received training in online instruction and are provided with mentorship in online instruction throughout the year.
- Trained mentors and online learning coordinators at the schools or adult education programs that support their students in online instruction.

So we strongly support the standards outlined in this Bill. However, if school systems will not award credit to students for taking online courses, they are depriving students of this opportunity – an opportunity to take the World language or AP courses they are interested in and meet their educational goals, but aren't offered in their school or the opportunity if they are having difficulty in a core subject like Algebra in November, to start again online rather than dropping out or failing while they wait for summer school.

I urge you to support Raised Bill 947 and provide all students in CT with this valuable education opportunity.

Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium Quick Facts



iTunes U The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium recently negotiated a state-wide contract with Apple to provide CT's public higher education institutions and K-12 schools with access to iTunes U, a multimedia platform bringing portable audio and visual learning materials to CT students. The CTDLC will promote the use of this innovative tool by providing training and shared software and hardware to those institutions.

eTutoring.org is a collaborative, multi-institutional, online tutoring tool. Through this platform, tutors can work with students answering questions in real time, or replying to questions and essay submissions that students have left for review and commentary. Sharing tutors on one platform is an affordable way to expand a school's tutoring program exponentially.

- 20 colleges and universities in CT use eTutoring
- 37 colleges and universities in 9 additional states use eTutoring (MA, NY, NJ, PA, VT, OH, WA, OR, IL)

ePortfolio.org allows students to create an online portfolio of their work, and to store their education and work experience, which can be used to draft resumes and to share collected information with their career counselors. Students can use this space to build a plan of study and to discuss their academic work with their academic advisors. Schools can also use ePortfolio for assessment, and to provide a tool for transparency in education.

- 16 colleges and universities in CT use ePortfolio
- 10 schools in 8 additional states -and one country, use ePortfolio (MA, CO, NJ, KY, SC, NE, PA, MI and Kosovo)

The **Connecticut Virtual Learning Center** offers online courses to CT High School students. Courses include Advanced Placement, credit recovery, and specialty courses not offered at all schools, such as Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Music Appreciation. Curriculum is highly interactive. All courses are taught by CT certified teachers and adhere to CT and national standards of quality.

- 11 school districts have students enrolled in one or more online course
- 55 additional districts have set up accounts to use the CT Virtual Learning Center

The **CT Adult Virtual High School** is a grant funded program providing students in the CT Adult Credit Diploma Program the option of earning credits toward their diploma online. A full schedule of courses is available over a four-term academic calendar, plus a summer session. The program also provides an online GED preparation course.

- 40 Adult Education programs in Connecticut participate in this program
- 1,200 enrollments in our online adult credit diploma program last year
- 300+ enrollments in the online GED preparation course last year

The CTDLC offers **Learning Management System (LMS) Hosting Services**, tailored to the needs of our clients. The CTDLC purchases the licenses and hardware that are shared in different ways by different schools, managed by one technical staff and suited to each schools specific needs. By working with the CTDLC, schools no longer need to purchase, manage and upkeep their own LMS, saving countless dollars in duplicate services.

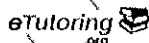
- 6 CT Colleges and universities use our LMS hosting services
- 2 State Agencies use our LMS hosting services (DPH, DPS)
- 8 additional schools and businesses use our LMS hosting services

Instructional Design Services include all aspects of moving content online, including classroom courses, developing multi-media courseware and learning objects, and design and development of sites.

- 5 CT agencies use our services: CT Hospital Association, CSU System Office, CT Adult Education, DPS and DPH

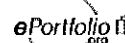
Call Center/Help Desk Services are available via the web, email and phone (toll-free) 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. These services are included with all of our education offerings and prevent schools from having to create and staff their own help desk for students using online services. Our Help Desk supports:

- 42 online programs at 26 CT Schools
- 43 schools in other states, (MA, NY, NJ, PA, VT, OH, WA, OR, IL, CO, KY, SC, MI) and Kosovo
- 75,000+ students



ct virtual learning

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connecticut adult virtual high school

